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General and complete disarmament

Conventional arms control at the regional and subregional levels

Report of the Secretary General

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I. Introduction

1. In its resolution 70/44 on conventional arms control at the regional and subregional levels, the General Assembly decided to give urgent consideration to the issues involved in conventional arms control at the regional and subregional levels, and requested the Secretary-General to seek the views of Member States on the subject and to submit a report to the Assembly at its seventy-first session.

2. Pursuant to that request, on 8 February 2016, the Secretariat sent a note verbale to Member States requesting their views on the subject. As of the writing of the present report, 10 replies have been received from Member States. The replies are reproduced in section II below. Subsequent replies will be issued as an addendum.

II. Replies received from Member States

Armenia

[Original: English]
[19 April 2016]

General Assembly resolution 70/44 offers an opportunity to examine the challenges related to conventional arms control at the regional and subregional levels, to identify violations and to seek and find lasting solutions.

Armenia has always been a staunch advocate for regional cooperation in every possible dimension, including in the realm of conventional arms control, which plays a significant role in promoting confidence-building and contributes to regional security.

Guided by this principled approach, Armenia is in favour of maintaining a conventional arms control regime within the framework of the United Nations, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and the Partnership for Peace/Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, making every effort to further strengthen the conventional arms control regime in Europe in general and in the South Caucasus in particular.

Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe

The Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe is one of the pillars of security and stability in Europe. Its implementation has promoted an unprecedented and wide-scale disarmament process in Europe and the growth of transparency in the conventional arms control regime. The Treaty has played a vital role as a stabilizing factor during the transition period in the European security environment. Unfortunately, the Treaty has been experiencing serious implementation problems recently and needs to be revisited in order to reflect the changes in the European security environment.

Mindful of existing problems, Armenia remains committed to its Treaty obligations, exchanges information on Treaty-limited equipment and the armed forces of Armenia and their structure and receives inspections. The reports of the latter clearly state that Armenia, even under the current state of affairs of the Treaty, puts significant effort into implementing it.

Armenia supports the resumption of negotiations to strengthen and modernize the conventional arms control regime in Europe. The basic approach is "more security with less armaments".

Violations of the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe by Azerbaijan

The Treaty's fundamental role and significance has grown, especially in the South Caucasus region where, unfortunately, Azerbaijan has unleashed a dangerous race of armaments.

According to official information on the implementation of the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe, as at 1 January 2016, Azerbaijan significantly exceeds its established ceilings in three categories of Treaty-limited equipment. The Azerbaijani holdings in battle tanks are 520 (permitted ceiling is 220), in armoured combat vehicles are 239 (permitted ceiling is 220) and in artillery are 864 (permitted ceiling is 285). Grave violations of the Treaty, a manifold increase in the military budget and the accumulation of offensive weaponry enabled Azerbaijan to use large-scale military force against Nagorno Karabakh on 2 April 2016. Azerbaijan should be held accountable for unleashing a large-scale offensive against the Nagorno Karabakh Defence Army and civilian settlements and for eroding military stability and security in the South Caucasus.

Confidence- and security-building measures of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe

The main tools for the Republic of Armenia in the field of conventional arms control are the OSCE confidence- and security-building measures: the Vienna Document 2011, the Global Exchange of Military Information database, the Document on Small Arms and Light Weapons, the Code of Conduct on Politico-Military Aspects of Security, the questionnaire on antipersonnel landmines, etc. Armenia considers the OSCE confidence- and security-building measures as part of its own security structure and an important means of reducing threats to its own and broader regional security. Armenia actively participates in the implementation of the Vienna Document provisions and the other aforementioned confidence- and security-building measures in the conventional arms sphere. The Armenian side supports the updating of the Vienna Document, which will reflect the current state of affairs.

Colombia

[Original: Spanish]
[31 May 2016]

The Republic of Colombia is committed to disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control and has actively participated in many global, regional and subregional initiatives to develop and strengthen conventional arms control capacities.

That participation is based on our national position, which emphasizes the following:

– Illegal possession of and illicit trafficking in conventional arms, particularly small arms and light weapons, should be penalized.

- Arms should be marked and registered so that national authorities can trace the origin of weapons diverted to the black market.
- Interinstitutional and international cooperation in the various areas concerned should be fostered to facilitate the exchange of information and good practices to ensure that such global phenomena as illicit trafficking in conventional arms are addressed in a coordinated way.
- Transfers of conventional weapons to armed non-State actors or for purposes proscribed in the international instruments to which the countries concerned are States parties should be prohibited.

In the last year, Colombia has participated in the following regional and subregional forums:

Organization of American States

As a State party to the Inter-American Convention against the Illicit Manufacturing of and Trafficking in Firearms, Ammunition, Explosives, and Other Related Materials, Colombia actively participated in the 17th meeting of the Consultative Committee established pursuant to the Convention, held in Washington D.C. in May 2015, where the countries of the region reported on their implementation of the Convention and agreed to continue their efforts to eliminate illicit trafficking in firearms, ammunition, explosives and related materials.

Southern Common Market and associated States

As a Southern Common Market (MERCOSUR) associated State, Colombia participates actively in the meetings of the MERCOSUR Working Group on Firearms and Ammunition and the Working Group's technical subgroup, the most recent of which was held in Asunción on 23 and 24 November 2015. Such participation is particularly important because it allows information-sharing and provides a forum in which the national authorities responsible for implementing conventional arms control policies can exchange views, with the aim of establishing joint initiatives.

Cuba

[Original: Spanish]
[26 April 2016]

Conventional arms control should be governed not only at the regional and subregional levels but also at the international level by international law and the principles of the Charter of the United Nations. Conventional and any other type of arms should be controlled in strict compliance with the principles of sovereignty, territorial integrity and non-intervention in the internal affairs of States.

Cuba considers that the Convention on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons Which May Be Deemed to Be Excessively Injurious or to Have Indiscriminate Effects is the appropriate international framework for the control of all such arms.

Conventional arms control at the regional and subregional levels must be based on respect for and recognition of national control measures. States should be

primarily responsible for implementing their arms control measures, based on the premise that control measures should be adapted to the different situations of each country and region.

It is the prerogative of each State to decide which weapons are considered surplus and which are not. It is for States to establish and implement the arms controls they consider appropriate and decide whether they need assistance in doing so.

National efforts must be accompanied with cooperation and assistance at the subregional, regional and international levels. For arms control to be effective, cooperation and assistance initiatives must continue to be strengthened not only at the regional and subregional levels but also at the international level. In addition, such controls should not be limited to conventional weapons but should include all weapons of mass destruction.

It should be emphasized that the countries of the Latin American and Caribbean region have helped to establish a favourable arms control environment by declaring Latin America and the Caribbean a peace zone at the second Summit of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC), held in Havana in January 2014. That proclamation represents the region's commitment to preventing war and resolving regional conflicts by peaceful means.

Cuba does not possess weapons of mass destruction of any kind. Its conventional arms are defensive in nature and intended to maintain national security and defence. They are properly controlled by the appropriate State bodies.

In Cuba, the vast majority of conventional arms are the property of the Ministry of the Revolutionary Armed Forces and the Ministry of the Interior, which both have the internal rules and mechanisms necessary for the rigorous and periodic control of stocks of such weapons and follow strict procedures to ensure the security of their arsenals.

No sales of any kind of arms are permitted in Cuba, either from or between individuals or between individuals and legal entities.

Czech Republic

[Original: English]
[22 April 2016]

The Czech Republic in 2015 implemented all commitments stemming from international agreements on arms control, disarmament and confidence- and security-building measures in Europe.

The Czech Republic, according to the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe:

- Organized and conducted one multinational inspection abroad (with the participation of two foreign inspectors from two countries);
- Organized one multinational training inspection (with the participation of 10 foreign inspectors from nine countries);
- Took part in three allied inspection teams abroad.

According to the Vienna Document:

- Organized one evaluation visit and two inspections of specified area;
- Took part in five visits to air bases, four visits to other military facilities, three shows of new types of weapons and one observation of military activities;
- Took part in three inspections and two evaluation visits as parts of foreign teams;
- Received two inspections of specified area;

The Czech Republic sent two guest observers on two inspections, conducted in accordance with article IV of the Dayton Peace Agreement.

The Czech Republic, according to the Treaty on Open Skies:

- Received one observation flight and conducted one joint observation flights;
- Took part in two other observation flights as part of a foreign team.

El Salvador

[Original: Spanish]
[2 May 2016]

In accordance with the obligations of El Salvador to the United Nations, I have the honour to inform you that, with regard to resolution 70/44, entitled "Conventional arms control at the regional and subregional levels", the armed forces of El Salvador, in coordination with the Conferencia de las Fuerzas Armadas Centroamericanas (Conference of the Armed Forces of Central American Countries), prepare monthly intelligence and operations reports and hold regional conferences and courses to prevent illicit trafficking in arms. The Ministry of Defence controls and registers firearms through the legislation on the control and regulation of arms, ammunition, explosives and similar items.

Jordan

[Original: Arabic]
[8 April 2016]

International arms control efforts began at the turn of the twentieth century at the Hague Conferences of 1899 and 1907, which sought to restrict military spending and regulate the conduct of war by defining the rights and responsibilities of belligerent and non-belligerent States during combat.

Arms control measures aim to reduce military capabilities or fully prohibit certain categories of widely used weapons, given that armament is in itself a primary source of tension and war. For that reason, a reduction in the number of weapons would in turn reduce the likelihood of armed conflict.

The General Assembly resolution on conventional arms control at the regional and subregional levels promotes peace and security at the regional and international levels.

States that manufacture and maintain large arsenals of conventional arms have a responsibility to control such arms, and can make thereby an effective reduction in their number and strengthen agreements concerning regional security.

Conventional arms control should be conducted simultaneously with negotiations and conventions for the reduction of stocks of nuclear weapons and weapons of mass destruction.

It is important that conventional arms control measures respect the right of States to possess arms in order to guarantee their own security and that no distinction be made among States or groups of States in that regard.

The principle of equal security for all must be the basis on which conventional arms control measures are taken. The security of any State represents a red line, and is the legitimate right of every State. The concept of State security must be the same for all States: the security of one State cannot be more important than that of another State.

In order to ensure the success of arms measures at the regional and subregional levels, it is important to consider and address why arms races occur. If one regional power is heavily armed, that will prompt the other States of the region to try to acquire arms in order to maintain strategic balance in respect of conventional arms.

Efforts should be made to combat terrorism and eliminate its sources of money and weapons. Arms-smuggling transactions and the black market should be tracked, because they have the potential to reignite the flames of conflict. The world's most powerful States should make earnest efforts to bring about resolutions of internal conflicts in certain States in the Middle East, which would help to slow the arms race.

It is therefore essential to focus on resolving international conflicts and, in particular, the Arab-Israeli conflict, and on reducing tensions in order to prevent an arms race in the region.

Jordan has consistently affirmed its respect for the principles set forth in United Nations instruments relating to arms, sovereignty and the equality of States, and for the right of States to own and acquire conventional arms for the purposes of legitimate self-defence.

Jordan is committed to United Nations resolutions and has signed numerous regional and international agreements and conventions relating to conventional and other arms. It calls for peace and security to be established in the region in order to put an end to the arms race in the region and the world.

Lebanon

[Original: Arabic]
[22 March 2016]

The Ministry of National Defence wishes to make the following points:

- In regard to this matter, the authoritative resolutions adopted by the United Nations should be duly complied with, and the Charter should be respected.
- Particular emphasis should be placed on the resolution of international disputes, in particular the Arab-Israeli conflict.
- States are equal in terms of sovereignty and territorial integrity. It is important to prevent an arms race and build confidence.

- Agreement should be reached on a clear and comprehensive definition of conventional arms.
- All concerned regional States should remain compliant with a view to precluding any repetition of the double standards applied in connection with the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. States should be held accountable in the event of non-compliance.
- The manufacture and transfer of arms should be controlled, and the smuggling of and illicit trafficking in arms should be suppressed in order to ensure that they do not fall into the hands of terrorists.
- Legislation should be enacted at the regional and international levels in order to limit the proliferation of such weapons, while allowing for the possibility of their individual or collective use to resist occupation or defend territory.
- Multilateralism should be strengthened as a means of furthering negotiation on arms regulation and disarmament.
- Attention should be paid to technological advances in several States, notably in the area of "smart" weapons and munitions, that might allow them to circumvent international law.

Portugal

[Original: English]
[2 May 2016]

Arms controls efforts have been one of the cornerstones of the international community security environment. Portugal shares international community concerns about the growing tendencies on the dissemination of conventional arms, and, bearing in mind the historical testimonies on this subject, Portugal considers that non-proliferation and disarmament are matters of grave importance in the promotion of peace and security in a global context and specifically in a regional and subregional context.

Portugal, along with its North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) partners, has ratified the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe and believes that this endeavour has proven to be an exceptional element to the security and stability of the European region, having established a transparency mechanism that manages to be a major element in the stability of the region.

The successful experience of the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe could be a good model for other regions of the world. Bearing this in mind, Portugal believes that a similar mechanism would prove to be a stability-promoting element in different parts of the globe, in a regional and subregional context.

Portugal is in favour of developing synergies between regional organizations that may be involved in arms control.

Portugal regrets the decision by the Russian Government to abandon the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe.

Portugal was one of the first 50 states to ratify the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT), which is the first legal disarmament instrument adopted by the United Nations in the last decade. We stand ready to promote the universalization of the ATT and we are

fully committed to the efforts of promoting its ratification. Besides bilateral initiatives to promote the Treaty, Portugal was present at the European Union regional seminars in support of the ATT implementation for Latin America and the Caribbean, for Economic Community of West African States members and their neighbours and also the national assistance programmes to Colombia and Senegal.

Turkmenistan

[Original: Russian]
[15 June 2016]

On 19 January 1998, Turkmenistan ratified the Convention on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons Which May Be Deemed to Be Excessively Injurious or to Have Indiscriminate Effects, and it entered into force for Turkmenistan on 1 March 1999.

Turkmenistan has played an active role at international meetings of the Ottawa process in Vienna, Bonn, Brussels and Ashgabat, which have made a major contribution towards the creation of a Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-personnel Mines and on Their Destruction. Turkmenistan was a joint drafter and is a State party to the Convention. Turkmenistan was the first among the States of the Central Asian region to sign the Treaty at the International Strategy Conference "Towards a Global Ban on Anti-Personnel Mines" in December 1997. Turkmenistan was elected Co-Chairman of the first meeting of States parties to the Convention (Maputo, 1999).

In view of its neutral status, no weapons are manufactured or sold on the territory of Turkmenistan. Turkmenistan takes the management of its defence assets seriously and consistently applies the principles of rigorous monitoring, responsible management and strict oversight.

Attaching special importance to the strengthening of international peace and security, Turkmenistan calls for the quantity of weapons to be reduced.

As the State that hosts the headquarters of the United Nations Regional Centre for Preventive Diplomacy for Central Asia, Turkmenistan supports the Centre's greater involvement in various aspects of regional issues, with the support of Member States of the United Nations and States members of other international organizations (the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, the European Union, the Commonwealth of Independent States and others).

In 2015, the international forum on peace, security and stability in the Central Asian region was successfully held in Ashgabat. As a party to international treaties and conventions of the United Nations and multilateral instruments on disarmament, Turkmenistan will continue to extend full cooperation to these processes, particularly at the regional level, and aims to host regional disarmament meetings in Central Asia on a regular basis.

The National Security Act of Turkmenistan of 4 May 2013, in one of the paragraphs on the country's military security, provides for cooperation in the context of international security structures on nuclear disarmament initiatives that support military security in the world and the region, strengthen mutual trust and reduce military danger (article 20).

Given that its national security is an integral part of international security, and also with a view to obtaining international guarantees of national security, Turkmenistan contributes to international (global and regional) security through participation in international organizations and in their international conferences, meetings and activities, as well as to the conclusion of treaties that are in the interests of the country's national security (article 25 of the National Security Act of Turkmenistan).

Ukraine

[Original: English]
[20 April 2016]

As an advocate of maintaining peace and security with the lowest possible level of armaments, including conventional ones, Ukraine recognizes the important role of conventional arms control (CAC), including at the regional and subregional levels, and its constituent elements laid out in General Assembly resolution 70/44 of 7 December 2015, and, accordingly, welcomes all respective measures in the field of CAC past, present and future.

This commitment to CAC has been reinforced by Russia's uncivilized behaviour, which has, inter alia, maliciously put CAC in Europe into a state of impasse, thus ensuring the erosion of trust and confidence in the military field, challenging the very essence of the contemporary European security architecture, as well as verifiable security- and confidence-building embodied in CAC and related confidence- and security-building measures (CSBMs).

Ukraine is a long-term responsible participant of pan-European and complementary bilateral confidence-building mechanisms relevant to conventional arms control, such as the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe, the Open Skies Treaty and the OSCE Vienna Document on CSBMs. Ukraine also is a part of bilateral agreements on CSBMs with neighbouring Hungary, the Republic of Poland, the Slovak Republic, the Republic of Belarus and Romania. Despite the tense situation in the country and the corresponding increase of burden on Ukraine's Armed Forces caused by Russia's aggression, Ukraine continues to comply with its obligations assumed under the above-referenced international instruments in the field of CAC and CSBMs.

At the same time, Ukraine's case is yet another reminder of the urgent need to revitalize and improve CAC in order to strengthen its capability, inter alia, via tightening the intrusiveness and obligatory levels to better address the existing security challenges in the areas of application.

Ukraine's case also compels a periodic assessment of the relevance, as well as the strengths and weaknesses, of CAC tools used by participating States, without waiting for acts of aggression.

Ukraine considers that confidence-building in the field of conventional arms should, first, deal with the traditional categories of conventional armaments with a view to spreading control over new categories; have as many participants as possible and cover as large an area as possible; be transparent to the maximum extent possible through information-exchange and verification intrusiveness; preferably be legally binding; be free from ambiguities in interpretation; be

periodically evaluated by parties for viability, effectiveness and the possibility for further enhancement by way of modernization; be free from spheres of influence, as well as such things as a "veto" vote, especially when it comes to aggression, etc.

The above-referenced approaches may enable interested parties to make progress in moving closer to peace and security throughout the area of application of confidence-building measures in the field of conventional arms.